

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

OBJECTS:

1. To provide for readers at home and abroad information concerning the life and thought of the British Churches in wartime.
2. To elucidate by news and quotations the spiritual issues at stake in the war.

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THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

The Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe has recently issued its Report for another year of activity. We quote extracts from the Report.

"The recent intensification on the European continent, under conditions of the most terrible cruelty and brutality, of what appears to be the Nazi policy of mass extermination of Jews and others has aroused feelings of horror and indignation throughout the civilised world and this renewal of tragedy is causing the Christian Council the deepest concern. Its concern was first expressed in December last, when the Board of Management unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"The Board of Management of the Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe expresses its grave concern at the terrible reports which have been received in this country of the way in which the Nazi Government is pursuing its apparent policy of the progressive extermination of European Jewry. The Board expresses its deep sympathy with the Jewish community, and its readiness to co-operate in every way within its power in any appropriate steps that may be taken to relieve any victims of this persecution who may succeed in making their escape."

"Since that date the Council has approached the various authorities concerned in the formulation of plans for the relief of such refugees as might be able to escape from this persecution and has been in frequent consultation with the other refugee organisations.

The Refugee Position

"While it will continue to assist in every practicable way the Jewish community in its dire distress, the Council's immediate concern is with those whose escape it was privileged to help in pre-war days. In many respects the lot of the German or Austrian refugee domiciled in this country has greatly improved during the year under review. Unemployment is no longer a serious problem, except for refugees of the professional classes and those in ill-health or over 60 years of age.

"At one time refugees from Germany and Austria suffered from the constant fear of an outbreak of hostile public opinion. Nothing of that sort has occurred during the year under review. On the contrary, there has been, apart from a few purely local incidents, general and warm appreciation of the contribution made by refugees to the national effort. Moreover, the public sympathy arising out of the Eastern European tragedy has reacted in favor of refugees already enjoying our hospitality in this country. On the other hand, many have had to suffer intense anxiety in regard to the fate of relations and friends as the result of the extension of the war to the Far East, the invasion by the Germans of 'unoccupied' France and, worst of all, the diabolical treatment that is being meted out to Jews and so-called 'non-Aryans' in the countries occupied by the Nazis.

Care of Children

"As was pointed out in the last Report, the Council shares with the Refugee Children's Movement responsibility for the care of 1,100 Christian children, who, together with 8,300 Jewish boys and girls,

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were brought to this country from Germany and Austria by the Movement in the nine months preceding the war.

A Post-War Commission

"With the increasing stabilisation of the position of refugees in this country it has become possible to give more attention to some of the problems likely to arise in connection with their post-war settlement. A memorandum setting out in some detail the general character of these problems was submitted for the consideration of the Board in November, 1941, by the Rev. Edward Quinn. This led to the setting up of a special Commission for Post-War Settlement. The personnel of the Commission consists chiefly of representatives of bodies working at Bloomsbury House, though a number of outside persons with special qualifications have been co-opted."

Finances of the Christian Council

In the course of the Financial Report the Council states:

"During the year under review the Christian Council continued to act as distributing agent for Government Grant to certain associated bodies under the official scheme, details of which were given in the last report. The total amount so distributed in the period under review was £38,658, which compares with £95,712 for the preceding two years. The reduced amount per annum of Government assistance under the scheme is a reflection of the greatly improved employment situation among refugees, a large number, hitherto totally or partially unemployed."

BISHOP'S VIEWS ON "WINGS FOR VICTORY" SERVICES

The Bishop of Norwich, writing in his Diocesan Letter for May, 1943, says:

"I have been consulted about the propriety of church services in connection with 'Wings for Victory' weeks. Of course there can be no question about churchpeople, either individually or as a body, doing all they can to help such efforts. Our duty to give all we can, in money as in all else, and to encourage others to do the same, in order speedily to bring about the destruction of the hideous wickedness against which we are fighting is clearly understood by us all. But can all this be associated with our worship? It is no answer to say that if we can't pray about it, we ought not to support it; for what is at issue is not the end in view but the par-

ticular means adopted. There are some who feel that in such times it is more than ever vital to keep the church's witness on the highest spiritual level, so that at least in the church's worship people may find the atmosphere of peace and love. Any association with mere money raising for war purposes, in days when this means not only weapons for our forces but bombs and shells terrorizing civilians, seems to them to be using the church for military propaganda, whereas our duty is to minister to the spiritual ideals of the nation. On the other hand, to stand aloof from such national efforts would seem to emphasize the gulf between church and people, making a dividing line between our duties as citizens and as churchmen.

"I appreciate the difficulty I have outlined and have great sympathy with the high purpose of those with whom I disagree: I can only state my own conclusion. The essential truth is that the war is not merely our concern, but God's. War is always hideous, always contrary to God's will, but this war has the added character of a fight to the death for the survival of Christian civilisation. It has all the qualities of a Crusade, and it is in the spirit of Crusaders that so many of our men fight by land and sea and air and so many men and women work and give at home. But it is hard for the nation to remain on such a level: the danger of mere materialism steadily increases. Do not such efforts as 'Wings for Victory' weeks give us unrivalled opportunities of recalling the nation to its great destiny and of lifting all our war-work on to a spiritual level? To emphasize the glory of self-sacrifice with its demand on our life as well as our pockets, to help people of all kinds to bring the national aim into harmony with the purpose of God, is surely one of our most cogent duties. If we close the door of the church to these appeals and confine them to the streets and the market places, may we not be doing disservice to the nation's soul?

"For these reasons I am myself willing to take part in special services for 'Wings for Victory' or similar ventures, just as I am willing to give money for them, but I could never condemn those who from motives just as conscientious feel it impossible to approve of such services in church. The constant prayer of all of us in these difficult days must be for grace and guidance to fulfil our earthly citizenship in loyalty to our heavenly Lord."

THE PLACE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

Nine professors of the University of Lund, Sweden, representing the principal faculties, have co-operated in bringing out a book entitled *Tidspegl* ("Mirror of the Times"), and a professor of Lutheran theology contributes an interesting essay with the title "Christianity in the ideological struggle."

In view of the relevance of the subject we are printing considerable extracts from this essay:

The war is not only a struggle between divergent ideas, but it is nevertheless a struggle of ideas. All those who reflect on the situation must agree about this.

The fact that Christian ideas and qualities express themselves differently through different consciences and become valid in different ways for different people cannot compromise Christianity itself. One can rest assured that every awakened and mature conscience represents a precious treasure, in spite of the fact that each one is led to its own conclusions.

What does compromise Christianity is the falsification of its values, whether it comes about through lack of thought or lack of conscience. This can happen when people make use of Christianity in a travestied form to arrive at a goal which is quite foreign to Christianity or, indeed, when one betrays Christianity in his actions as those Christians do who are guilty of betraying true Christianity, either through laziness or through spiritual paralysis following in the wake of crude propaganda. Christianity runs a great risk in our day of seeing its principles mixed with ideas and virtues belonging to quite a different order of things.

God's Kingdom and Outward Circumstances

It is clear that Christianity, as the Kingdom of God, cannot be indifferent to the condition of the social order in any given situation. It is true that theoretically one can be a Christian just as well in a castle as in a hut, in a house with twelve rooms as in a lodging with one apartment, in a democratic state or under a dictatorship, in time of peace as in time of war, but that does not prevent the fact that all circumstances are not equally favourable to the coming and development of the Kingdom of God.

Christ has never worked out a social contract or a political programme. Right

up to His death He did nothing but struggle for the Kingdom of God on earth. But He has given to humanity the power to renew and reform itself. It is the duty of Christians at all times to attempt to reform the social order according to the spirit of the Gospel of Christ, and to fashion it so that it may serve as the basis for the Kingdom of God.

Violence, tyranny, suppression of liberty, holding personality of little account, are in themselves incompatible with the spirit of Christianity, and are in consequence obstacles to the Kingdom of God.

It follows that the Christian is obliged to struggle to create a society where such forces cannot come to wield authority. If it so happens that different consciences come to different conclusions when it is question of ethical problems, it is just as likely that different Christians will have different opinions on social and political subjects. For my part, there can be no doubt that, from the Christian point of view, that political constitution is best which is the most favourable to the Kingdom of God. Liberty is the refreshing and vivifying atmosphere of the Kingdom of God. The state must organise liberty. As Christians we must first of all exact from the state and from society these legitimate rights: to move freely as personalities, to govern ourselves with personal autonomy and to develop in a truly personal way. 'Freedom' and 'liberty' are words which the New Testament employs with predilection.

Despotism Contrary to Divine Law

The Christian state, as far as one can speak of such a state, must be a society where right is the determining basis of law. Arbitrary despotism is contrary to the divine order, as much as is anarchy and the absence of law. There is a proverb which says that where there is no law, charity withers up.

The state must never again become an end in itself. It is a means and a safeguard for the development and the amelioration of personal life. Within this liberty of personal life one must include the right and the duty of public discussion and the possibility for citizens to make their opinion and their wishes count in the field of human society. We wish to struggle for our ideas with all our energies to the very end. The Christian can give his effective support, with good hope and with a quiet conscience, to a constitutional state which respects the principle of liberty; he can do

so both as a human being and as a Christian. There are Christians who are so poor-spirited that they lean to a purely spiritual ideal, finding some place for themselves in the other world and turning their back on this world, on its culture, on the state, and on society. They assume a heavy responsibility, having forgotten the Lord's Prayer in which we all pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

We have seen quite close to us what it means for the Church and for the Christian to strive to protect rigidly the essence and the inviolable rights of true Christianity. The martyr is once more becoming a moving reality at the very moment when a modern Cæsarism has seized power.

What we have to do as Christians to-day is to bring our ideas to bear on every situation, and at all times to hammer our great ideas into the hearts of men. Then we must lend our support to every good work which leads to the victory of goodwill and which strives to create an atmosphere of justice and humanity in human relationships.

BISHOP A. W. LEONARD

Our Bulletin No. 182 gave an account of the work to be undertaken throughout American theatres of war by Bishop A. W. Leonard, special envoy of President Roosevelt. Most of our readers will have read last week of his tragic death in the aircraft accident which cost the lives of Lt.-General Andrews and several other American officers and men.

The deepest regret was felt in British church circles when the news of this tragic accident reached England. Bishop Leonard had already made many friends in England and there is no doubt that if the tour had not been ended in this untimely way the visit of the Bishop would have been another valuable link between the Christian forces of Britain and the U.S.A.

THE BIBLE SOCIETY IN WARTIME

An interesting link with the past was revealed at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London on May 5th. The chairman, Lord Sankey (a former Lord Chancellor), read a letter from William Wilberforce bearing the date March 7th, 1804, the date on which the Bible Society was founded. It had recently been found in the archives of the Bible House. The letter warmly approved the founding of the Society and

throws further light on the devotion of William Wilberforce to Christian and humanitarian causes. It was, of course, largely owing to the efforts of this Christian statesman that slavery was abolished in the British Empire and £20,000,000 paid by the Government to the planters to compensate for their liberation.

The society reported that in spite of wartime difficulties the Gospel had been translated into and printed in seven new languages. The income showed an increase of £35,000. The Bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Edward Woods) said that most of what was good in our national life could be traced to the Bible; it was the best handbook for the post-war world any man could have.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Slater, Moderator of the United Church in Canada, and Rector of St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, is at present making a tour in Great Britain. He addressed a Press Conference in London on May 7th, when those present were deeply interested in his picture of Canadian life to-day and in his first impressions of wartime life in Great Britain.

Professor Reinhold Niebuhr, of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, has arrived on a two months' visit to Great Britain. He is one of the outstanding Christian thinkers of this generation, a forceful speaker and a dynamic personality. He delivered recently a series of the Gifford Lectures in Scotland, and is well known both as a leader of the movement which centres on the Oxford Conference of 1937 and as author of "Moral Man and Immoral Society," "The Nature and Destiny of Man," and other sociological studies.

Dr. Niebuhr addressed the Congregational Union Assembly on May 10th. He said that we were facing a terrible tyranny in the world to-day and that Britain was the one nation which had anticipated the inevitable. There would be a political, moral, and spiritual debate in America as to whether Americans had a moral obligation to the rest of the world. He hoped the answer would be "Yes."

Among the arrangements made for him are meetings in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh (May 16th-25th), where he will address the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and in Newcastle-on-Tyne (June 6th-8th).